

coupled with the king's repressive actions since February 1, have contributed to a political crisis that threatens not only the future of democracy but the monarchy itself.

Economic aid to support health, agriculture, hydropower, and other programs through nongovernmental organizations is not affected by my amendment. If the situation changes and the Secretary of State certifies that the conditions in U.S. law have been met, military aid can resume. But that alone will not solve the Maoist problem. The Maoists are expert at intimidating the civilian population and carrying out surprise attacks and melting back into the mountains. While they do not have the strength to defeat the army, neither can they be defeated militarily.

The only feasible solution is through a democratic political process that has the broad support of the Nepalese people. Perhaps seeking to placate his critics, the king, without consulting the political opposition parties, announced municipal elections for February 8, 2006. Not surprisingly, the parties say they will not participate in an electoral process dictated by the palace and when the army and the king's handpicked representatives have taken control of local affairs and are unlikely to relinquish power.

The U.S. Embassy is skeptical of the Maoists' intentions and has publicly discouraged the political parties from forging an agreement with the Maoists. This is understandable, since the Maoists have used barbaric tactics that should be universally condemned. But this conflict cannot be won militarily and the king has rejected a political accommodation with the country's democratic forces. He is imposing new restrictions on the media and civil society, and he has spumed offers by the international community to mediate. Nepal's younger generation, who see no role for the monarchy in Nepal's future, are taking to the streets. It may not be long before the army is faced with a fateful choice. Will it continue to side with the palace even if it means turning its weapons on prodemocracy protesters and facing international censure, or will it cast its lot with the people?

It is a choice that we may also have to make. For the better part of a year, the United States and others friends of Nepal, as well as many brave Nepalese citizens, have tried to nudge the king back toward democracy. It has not worked. With the king increasingly imperious and isolated and the political parties already making overtures to the Maoists, what is to be lost by calling for the Maoists to extend the ceasefire, for the army to reciprocate, for international monitors to verify compliance, and for representatives of all sectors of society who support a democratic, peaceful Nepal to sit down at the negotiating table?

There are no guarantees, but it would test the Maoists' intentions and it

might create an opening for agreement on a democratic process, with the support of international mediation, that can finally begin to address the poverty, corruption, discrimination and other social ills that have fueled the conflict. The people of Nepal, who for generations have suffered far more than their share of hardship and injustice, deserve no less.

#### MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, last Tuesday the open enrollment period for the Medicare Part D prescription drug program began. This program has been praised by the administration as a great benefit for seniors, but I can tell you that seniors are not so sure. According to a survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation, only 20 percent say they will sign up. Over one-third say they won't, and the rest don't know what they are going to do.

One thing we do know for sure is that seniors are confused and scared. I have received over 4,000 letters from them telling me so. And why wouldn't they be. They have a series of complicated decisions to make.

First, they have to decide whether they want drug coverage. Do they already have drug coverage that is better or just as good as what is offered under the plan? And if they don't, do the costs of the plan exceed the benefits? And what will happen in the future? Should they sign up now to avoid the penalty for signing up late?

Second, if they do decide to join the program, what plan do they choose? In California, 18 companies are providing 47 stand-alone prescription drug plans. These plans all have different premiums, copays, and lists of drugs they will cover. For those in managed care plans, if they choose one of the stand-alone drug plans instead of their managed care plan, they will lose their health coverage.

In addition, seniors must make sure that their neighborhood pharmacy accepts the plan. Otherwise, they will end up having to find a new pharmacy that is probably less convenient. And after all that, any plan can—on 60 days notice—change the list of drugs it covers. Seniors, however, can change their plans only once a year.

If seniors do choose to participate, the benefit itself is meager. There is a large coverage gap—the so-called donut hole—so seniors must pay 100 percent of drug costs once they spend \$2,250 and before they spend \$5,100. Moreover, there is nothing in the program that will actually lower the cost of prescription drugs, and, in fact, Medicare is expressly prohibited from negotiating for lower prices.

Mr. President, the seniors who are the sickest and poorest have the most to lose with this new program. Those 6.1 million seniors are eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare. They are known as dual eligibles. Currently,

State Medicaid programs cover their drug costs, but as of January 1, they will be switched to the less generous Medicare program, and the States will be prohibited from using Medicaid to provide better coverage.

We need to make changes to the program now so that our seniors do not suffer. That is why I am a proud cosponsor of several bills that will change the harshest parts of this program. We must allow Medicare to negotiate on behalf of seniors for lower drug prices. We must allow States to use Medicaid to improve the drug coverage of the sickest and poorest seniors. We must end the coverage gap for all seniors. We must allow seniors more time to understand the program before they are required to enroll.

Mr. President, these changes are needed—and needed now. Without them, the promise of a Medicare prescription drug benefit may turn out to be a hollow one.

#### THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, I was proud to serve on the Education Committee when it recommended the original Education for the All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, and I am proud to join Senator ENZI today as a sponsor of this resolution, which recognizes the major impact of the law on the lives of disabled children and their families across the Nation, by guaranteeing the right of every disabled child to a free public education.

We know that disabled does not mean unable. Children with disabilities have the same dreams as every other child in America to grow up and lead a happy and productive life. We know that IDEA helps them fulfill that dream.

It says children cannot be cast aside or locked away because they have a disability. Those days are gone in America—hopefully forever.

Children with disabilities have rights like every other child in America, including the right to learn with other children in public schools and prepare themselves for the future.

But even as we celebrate 30 years of continuing success in the education of disabled children, we continue to hear objections to the act's high cost, its paperwork, and the burden of litigation. Those are important considerations, but we can't let them overwhelm the vast benefit of IDEA.

The act is about disabled children and their rights. It is about their hopes and dreams of living independent and productive lives. It is about parents who love their children and struggle for them every day against a world that is too often inflexible and unwilling to meet their needs. It is about teachers who see the potential inside a disabled child, but don't have the support or training they need to fulfill it.

IDEA is our declaration as a nation that these children matter and that we

will do all we can to help their parents and teachers and communities achieve their education goals. That is why the government should make a clear commitment to provide adequate funds for special education. What is needed is a solid education plan for each child, a way to chart the child's progress, and a way to hold schools accountable if they fall short. That is not placing an unfair burden on schools. It is the correct expectation of a decent school system in America.

*Brown v. the Board of Education* struck down school segregation by race and said that all children deserve equal access to education under the Constitution. But it wasn't until the passage of the Education for the Handicapped Act in 1975 that the *Brown* decision had real meaning for children with disabilities.

Only then did we finally end school segregation by disability and open the doors of public schools to disabled children. Only then did the Nation's 4 million disabled children begin to have the same opportunities as other children to develop their talents, share their gifts, and lead productive lives.

We must never go back to the days when disabled children were denied public education, when few if any preschool children with disabilities received services, and when the disabled were passed off to institutions and substandard schools to be kept out of sight and out of mind.

We have made immense progress since those days. Six and a half million children with disabilities now receive special education services. Almost all of them—96 percent—are learning alongside their nondisabled fellow students.

The number of young children with early development problems who receive childhood services has tripled in the past 30 years. More disabled students are participating in State and national testing programs. Graduation rates and college enrollment rates for disabled students are steadily rising.

The opportunities for further progress are boundless. We know far more about disability today than a quarter century ago. We have much greater understanding of childhood disabilities, and how to help all such children to learn and achieve. We are finding out more and more each year about the power of technology to enable these children to lead independent lives. It means they can communicate with others, explore the world on the Internet, and move in ways we couldn't have imagined 5 years ago, much less in 1975 when the law was first enacted.

I hope all our colleagues will join us in recognizing the extraordinary role of IDEA in protecting the rights and broadening the opportunities available to children with disabilities. Let's work together to renew our commitment to IDEA and fulfill its great promise of hope for the future.

#### 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEDICATION AND OPERATION OF THE U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY

Mr. ALLARD. I rise today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the dedication and operation of the U.S. Air Force Academy, located in my home State of Colorado. It has been a privilege for Colorado to host the Academy for more than five decades. The Academy's outstanding record of turning cadets into officers of integrity and honor is a source of pride for many in Colorado.

Yet sometimes when we drive on I-25 and pass the Air Force Academy's beautiful campus, we assume that Academy has always been there. It is easy to forget the hard work it took to get the Academy to Colorado in the first place.

It all began in May of 1949 when then-Secretary of Defense James Forrestal appointed a commission to evaluate the general education for each military service. This commission was chaired by Robert L. Stearns, president of the University of Colorado and father-in-law of Supreme Court Justice Byron "Whizzer" White. The commission also included other notables such as GEN. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was then president of Columbia University. The Stearns Board quickly agreed that the U.S. Air Force needed an academic institution of excellence and that such an Academy should be established without delay.

Congress authorized the creation of the Air Force Academy in 1954. To determine a site for the new institution, then-Secretary of the Air Force Harold E. Talbott, appointed a team of individuals to assist him. The Air Force Academy Site Selection Board, as it was called, reviewed more than 580 locations in 34 States, and narrowed the field down to 7, 1 of which was Colorado Springs, CO. A year later, the majestic 14,000 acre area in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains near Colorado Springs was chosen by Secretary Talbott to be the site for the new U.S. Air Force Academy.

The selection of the site, however, would prove to be easy part. The design and construction of the permanent location would take years to complete. In the meantime, the Air Force had to find an alternate site so classes and training could begin. Lowry Air Force Base in Denver took on this mission and hosted the Academy until permanent buildings could be constructed.

The Academy staff was activated in the summer of 1954 when LTG Hubert Harmon, who had previously served as special assistant for Air Force Academy matters and was a member of the 1949 Air Academy Site Selection Board, assumed command. President Eisenhower, a West Point classmate and close personal friend of General Harmon, personally selected him as the first superintendent, stating "Doodles" Harmon would be the best man for the job.

The staff had only 11 months to prepare for the arrival of the first class in

the summer of 1955. Due to space limitations, only 306 young men were admitted into the first class, the class of 1959. Thousands of applications were reduced to a few hundred, and those selected were truly America's "cream of the crop".

Dedication Day began with the arrival of 306 young men on July 11, 1955. The morning was spent processing such as fitting uniforms and getting haircuts. By 11 a.m. they were all lined up for intensive drill instruction. That afternoon, the stands were filled with over 4,000 military and civilian dignitaries, public officials, foreign attaches, cadets from West Point and Annapolis, press, and parents. With a flight of B-36 bombers flying overhead and the USAF band playing, the 306 cadets marched on the field in a near perfect formation.

At the time no one could have predicted that this small class would turn out Rhodes Scholars, numerous general officers and even All-American football players. Surprisingly, before they were to graduate, they would lead their football team to an undefeated season and a tie in the 1959 Cotton Bowl, one of the most underrated achievements in the history of major college sports.

LTG Hubert Harmon retired with lung cancer before the first class graduated in 1959. He will be remembered for his tireless work and dedication to the establishment of the Academy. He was the first person interred at the Air Force Academy Cemetery and is recognized by many as the "Father of the Air Force Academy."

Major General Briggs took over as the Academy's second superintendent, and during his tour of duty there, in 1958, the wing of 1,145 cadets moved to its present site from Denver. A year later, the Academy received its accreditation, and on March 3, 1964, the authorized strength of the cadet wing was increased to 4,417. In 1976, women were admitted for the first time into the Academy. The first class of women graduated in May 1980.

To date, more than 35,000 cadets have graduated from the Academy. The achievements of those who have graduated from the Academy have been many: 315 of these graduates have become general officers, to include former Chiefs of Staff of the Air Force, Generals Ronald Fogelman and Mike Ryan, 32 cadets have been selected as Rhodes Scholars, and 539 have entered medical school.

Even more important, 128 graduates have given their lives in the defense of our Nation, and 36 have been prisoners of war. We honor those who have served our Nation with such sacrifice and patriotism.

Over the years, the Air Force Academy has had to confront several difficult challenges. The institution has risen above these challenges and, in its quest for excellence, has become a model for other academic institutions